

*Note on the Mustard Plant of the Scriptures.* By Mr. LAMBERT.

I beg leave to offer also to the notice of the Society a few observations relating to the Mustard Plant of the Scriptures, about which so many doubts have been raised. I am convinced it is the mustard now in daily use among us. Mustard-seed was used by the Romans and other nations of antiquity in medicine, as it is at this day. I shall endeavour to prove from the New Testament that the *Sinapis nigra* is the plant our Saviour alludes to in Matthew, chap. xiii. verses 31 and 32. "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Likewise in another part, Mark, chap. iv. verses 31 and 32. "It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it." Our Saviour is not to be understood as speaking scientifically or specifically when he said, the smallest of seeds; he was speaking only comparatively, and meant no more than a small seed; and when he spoke of it as the greatest of herbs, and becoming a tree, he may be supposed to have meant no more than that it bore a resemblance to a tree of low stature: its branches would give it the appearance of a tree, and small birds might lodge or rest upon it.

Now in the two last verses quoted we find it described as being a great herb, and branched, so that the fowls of the air might lodge under it, as the partridge and quails do under our corn. The following passage in Luke, chap. xvii. verse 6. "And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed," plainly shows it was a grain in common use, and he therefore chose it as his figure, that it might be understood by the meanest capacity. What Mr. Frost says about the *Phytolacca* he took from some conversation he heard in my library, not relating to the Mustard-seed of Scripture, but to a plant mentioned by Captains Irby and Mangles, of which they brought me a specimen, and which proved to be *Salvadora persica*, found by them growing in a hot valley

of the Holy Land, although a very common plant in the East Indies. Now as there is but one mustard-seed mentioned in three different places in the Scriptures, the oldest records appear to prove that the mustard so common in those days, and to which our Saviour so often alludes, was a species of *Sinapis*, and most probably *Sinapis nigra*.

Captains Irby and Mangles inform me they have seen our Mustard plant in the Holy Land growing as high as their horses' heads; and other travellers have seen the *Sinapis nigra* growing to the height of ten feet.